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ABSTRACT

In an effort to elicit student attitudes concerning residence hall living on campus a questionnaire was designed and administered to a random sample of 1,100 resident students at the University of South Carolina. The survey instrument consisted of a set of sixteen statements that required an "is" and a "should be" response. The greatest disparity between the percentages of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed to an "is" statement and a "should be" statement was with the item "the residence hall is/should be a place where one can study quietly" (52.6 percent/93.3 percent). The item with the highest percentage of agreement was "the residence hall is/should be a place to make new friends" (over 95 percent agreed). The high response rate of the item dealing with opportunities for interaction with the opposite sex reinforced the thinking of the staff about the need for co-ed living. Results were analyzed to compare dormitories and to compare male and female responses and were used by the Residential Life Services staff in planning for residence halls. In general the students expressed satisfaction with the residence hall program of the University. Over 50 percent feel the residence hall is a place to seek advice, to make new friends, to be known as a person and not as a number, to study quietly, to be alone, to find help with courses, to help with one's judgments in solving problems, to provide an opportunity to complete one's growth into adulthood, to sleep, and to party. Questionnaire items and data are included in this report. (JT)

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RESIDENCE HALLS PERCEPTIONS STUDY

A Report of the Perceptions of Students Regarding the Residence Halls at the University of South Carolina.

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RESIDENCE HALLS PERCEPTIONS STUDY

Method

In an effort to elicit student attitudes concerning residence hall living on campus, a questionnaire was designed and administered to a random sample of 1,100 resident students. The survey instrument consisted of a set of sixteen statements which required an "is" and a "should be" response. One pair of questions, for example, enabled each student who participated in the survey to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 his or her opinion about the statements, "the residence hall is a place where one can party", and "the residence hall is a place where one should be able to party."

The questionnaire was administered during the fall semester, 1974 on the campus of the University of South Carolina. Each resident of every sixth residence hall room was requested to answer the questionnaire which was distributed. Of those sampled, 961 or 87.4% returned the survey instrument. One hundred thirty-six of the returned questionnaires were not used. The unusable questionnaires were returned incorrectly or were not complete. A total of 825 instruments were used for the survey report. There were approximately 6,600 residents on campus with an equal ratio of men to women. Each hall was staffed with a graduate resident assistant and several undergraduate hall advisors. All but one of the halls were designated as being a men's or a women's hall.

Characteristics of Respondents

The 825 students who composed the usable data base were equally representative of both sexes (47% male vs. 53% female). The following class composition was represented in the study: Freshmen, 29%; Sophomore, 27%; Junior, 23%; Senior, 16%; and Graduate and Law, 5%. Ninty-one percent of the participants classified themselves as "white", while 6% classified themselves as "black,"

and 2% indicated "other."

Respondents who indicated they were in their first semester at U.S.C. (main campus) represented 38.2% of the total. Slightly more than 10 per cent had been at U.S.C. two semesters; 20.7% three semesters; 74% four semesters; and 10.1% five semesters. Approximately 11% had been at U.S.C. more than five semesters.

The majority (51.6% of respondents stated that they lived under Open House Plan C, daily open house. The next largest group (37.9%) was Plan B, week-end open house. Less than ten per cent (7.4%) of the respondents lived in Bates West, apartment style living. The fewest number (2.8%) lived under Plan A, no open house.

Other characteristics of the respondents included the following:

1. About half the respondents (48.2%) had a car on campus.
2. Only 9.9% responding had ever held a residence hall position.
3. Most of the respondents were from South Carolina (75.2%)

The questionnaires and the total responses given in percentages are presented in TABLE I.

Results

GENERAL FINDINGS

The majority of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with eleven of the sixteen "is" statements and fourteen of the sixteen "should be" statements. The greatest disparity between the percentages of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed to an "is" statement and a "should be" statement was with the item "the residence hall is/should be a place where one can study quietly." (52.6%/93.3%). The item with the highest percentage of agreement was "the residence hall is/should be a place to make new friends." Over 95% agreed that the residence hall is and should be a place to meet new friends.

There are two items which had very low percentages of agreement; these two statements were similar in content: "the residence hall is/should be a place where one can meet faculty and administrators on an informal basis" and "the residence hall is/should be a place to provide academically related programs not found in the classroom."

The items with the highest percentages of "no opinion" responses appear to have something in common. The items are all somewhat structured programs of interaction. These items include a place to seek advice, a place to provide rap sessions in order to test one's values and attitudes, a place to provide one with small discussion groups to help one gain independence from one's parents, a place to provide one with informal discussions to help one learn more about one's self, and a place to provide one with informal discussions that will improve one's judgements in solving problems.

Students responding apparently felt strongly that the residence hall is a place where one can sometimes be alone, in spite of the fact that there are no single rooms available to residents. Over three fourths (77.4%) of the respondents indicated they felt the residence hall is a place where one can be alone.

Nearly three fourths of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the residence hall is a place where one is able to find help in his courses. A greater percentage of those students responding to the questionnaire agreed that the residence hall "should be" a place where one can find help in his courses (86.3%).

Less than one-half of the residents felt that the residence hall "is a place where one has the opportunities to interact with members of the opposite sex." Three-fourths of the respondents, however, agreed or strongly agreed that the residence hall "should be" a place to interact with the opposite sex. When analyzing the data by the variable of race, more black respondents than white agreed that the residence hall is a place where one has the opportunities

to interact with members of the opposite sex. Over half (52.9%) of the black residents compared to 40.5% of the white respondents agreed with this statement.

One other major difference between black and white students' responses occurred on another item. Over three fourths (76.6%) of the white respondents indicated the residence hall is a place where one can party, wile only 50.9% of the black residents surveyed agreed with this statement. Similarly, 74.5% of the white students thought the residence halls "should be" a place to party, while only 47% of the black residents agreed the residences "should be" a place to party. Other minority group students responded very much like the black students, with 46.7% reporting the residences are a place where one can party and 40% indicating the halls "should be" a place to party.

Three variables that made no difference in the responses of the students were as follows:

1. Having a car or not having a car on campus.
2. Holding a residence hall position or not holding a residence hall position.
3. Whether the student was from South Carolina or out of state.

MALE/FEMALE COMPARISON

A closer examination of the responses to the question of whether a Residence Hall is or should be a place to party revealed an interesting difference in views held by each sex. The scores for males and females varied by a total of more than 10 percentage points. (See TABLE II). Moreover, the direction of response to the question when analyzed by sex was in the opposite direction. In fact, a greater percentage of the male respondents indicated agreement that the Residence Hall is rather than should be a place where one can party. A greater percentage of female respondents, on the other hand, indicated agreement that the Residence Hall should be rather than is a place to party.

Further analysis of the data, revealed a similar relationship between sexes for the question asking whether the Residence Hall is or should be a place where one has the opportunity to interact with members of the opposite sex. Although 75% of the sample agreed that the Residence Hall should be a place of interaction with the opposite sex, male and female respondents again varied with respect to both direction and magnitude. Male participants were more likely than females to agree that the Residence Hall "is a place". A vast majority (86%) of the males agreed while only 36% of the female participants agreed with the interaction statement. (see TABLE III)

RESIDENCE HALL COMPARISON

In analyzing the data by residence hall there are some generalizations that can be made in addition to those made in the analysis by sex or class. In responding to the statement that the residence hall is a place to make new friends, 100% of the sample in Maxcy-Thornwell, Douglas, and Wade Hampton dorms either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Douglas, one of the residence halls in a six hall complex, is the hall that had the highest percentage of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statement the residence hall is a place to find academically related programs not found in the classroom. This may be related to the fact that the graduate student who administered that building also taught a section of freshman English to many of the residents and advised others on their assignments.

Two residence halls that seem natural for close examination are Bates West and McClintock. Bates West, containing only juniors, seniors, graduate and law students, is the University's only coeducational residence hall. Four hundred students are housed in groups of four in two bedroom apartments. McClintock, housing one hundred forty-nine women, is the only residence hall that is almost completely freshmen. Many of the statements about Bates West and McClintock should be consistent with the analysis by class.

Bates West had the lowest percentage of any residence hall respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements: The residence hall is a place to seek advice, a place to provide rap sessions to test one's values and attitudes, a place to meet new friends, a place for small discussion groups to help one gain independence from one's parents. Not surprisingly, the sample in Bates West had the highest percentage of any residence hall sample who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the residence hall is a place where one has the opportunity to interact with members of the opposite sex.

McClintock respondents had the highest percentage of any residence hall who agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements: The residence hall is a place where one is known as a person and not a number, a place to provide one with small discussion groups to help one gain independence from parents, a place to provide one with group experiences to complete one's growth into adulthood. The McClintock sample had the lowest percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the residence hall is a place where one can party.

TABLE IV presents the total responses ranked according to the difference between "is" and "should be" from largest difference to smallest difference for each item.

Conclusions

The Residential Life Services staff utilized the results of this study in providing information regarding several aspects of residence hall life. The high response rate of the item dealing with opportunities for interaction with the opposite sex reinforced the thinking of the staff about the need for co-ed living. As a result, another residence hall will be available for students during the 1976 -- 77 academic year with co-ed living. The data revealed that students did not perceive the residence halls as a place to meet faculty and administrators. The Residential Life Services staff will be

providing three academic courses and 28 mini courses taught by faculty and staff in the planned co-ed hall for 1976--77.

Other items served as a catalyst for attempting new areas for programming and activities. Planning for the residence halls has also been affected by the survey results.

In general, the students at the University of South Carolina expressed satisfaction with the residence hall program of the University. Over 50% of the residents in the survey feel the residence hall is a place to seek advice, to make new friends, to be known as a person and not as a number, to study quietly, to be alone, to find help with their courses, to help with one's judgments in solving problems, to provide an opportunity to complete one's growth into adulthood, to sleep, to party.

Such information as provided in this survey greatly assisted those administrators dealing with residence hall programs by either changing or reinforcing views held on the direction of the program. Such information will continue to be vital to those involved in making decisions regarding residence halls. A follow-up study should be attempted to measure changes in student perceptions which may be brought about as a result of new planning and programming based on the data received in this study.

TABLE I

TOTAL RESULTS OF SURVEY
BY PERCENTAGE

Strongly Agree and Agree	No Opinion	Disagree and Strongly Disagree	
89.1	27	8.3	Is a place to sleep.
92.3	4.0	3.7	Should be a place to sleep.
51.6	26.3	22.0	Is a place to seek advice.
68.2	21.6	10.2	Should be a place to seek advice.
42.6	29.9	27.2	Is a place to provide rap sessions in order to test one's values and attitudes.
54.5	28.4	16.8	Should be a place to provide rap sessions in order to test one's values and attitudes.
74.0	12.6	13.2	Is a place where one can party.
72.6	12.5	14.6	Should be a place where one can party.
95.6	1.7	2.7	Is a place to make new friends.
97.9	1.3	.7	Should be a place to make new friends.
25.0	33.2	40.6	Is a place to provide academically related programs not found in the classroom.
49.4	28.5	21.6	Should be a place to provide academically related programs not found in the classroom.
78.6	10.7	10.7	Is a place where one is known as a person and not as a number.
93.9	4.1	1.9	Should be a place where one is known as a person and not as a number.
52.6	8.0	39.1	Is a place where one can study quietly.
93.3	4.4	2.3	Should be a place where one can study quietly.
50.2	16.8	32.7	Is a place where one has opportunities to interact with members of the opposite sex.
70.0	16.7	9.2	Should be a place where one has the opportunities to interact with members of the opposite sex.

TABLE I -- CONTINUED

Strongly Agree and Agree	No Opinion	Disagree and Strongly Disagree	
77.4	5.0	17.5	Is a place where one can sometimes be alone.
91.6	5.7	2.6	Should be a place where one can sometimes be alone.
40.3	32.4	27.0	Is a place to provide one with small discussion groups to help one gain independence from one's parents.
52.9	31.8	15.2	Should be a place to provide one with small discussion groups to help one gain independence from one's parents.
46.5	30.9	22.4	Is a place to provide one with informal discussions to help one learn more about one's self.
60.6	29.7	9.5	Should be a place to provide one with informal discussion groups to help one learn about one's self.
70.4	12.6	17.0	Is a place where one is able to find help in his courses (i.e. using other students as resources).
86.3	8.7	5.0	Should be a place where one is able to find help in his courses (i.e. using other students as resources).
53.5	25.8	20.5	Is a place to provide one with informal discussions that will improve ones judgment in solving problems.
68.0	23.9	8.0	Should be a place to provide one with informal discussions that will improve one's judgment in solving problems.
14.0	17.9	67.8	Is a place where one can meet faculty and administrators on an informal basis.
46.2	24.1	29.6	Should be a place where one can meet faculty and administrators on an informal basis.
66.2	20.2	13.4	Is a place to provide one with group experiences to complete one's growth into adulthood.
78.7	16.1	5.1	Should be a place to provide one with group experiences to complete one's growth into adulthood.

TABLE II

The residence hall is/should be a place where one can party.

	IS	SHOULD BE
Male	80.4%	73.1%
Female	67.6%	71.0%

TABLE III

The Residence hall is/should be a place where one can interact with the opposite sex.

	IS	SHOULD BE
Male	86.0%	82.7%
Female	35.8%	65.9%

TABLE IV

ITEMS RANKED BY GREATEST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
"IS" AND "SHOULD BE"
BY PERCENTAGE

Difference between "Is" and "Should Be" on Basis of Strongly Agree and Agree	
40.7	A place where one can study quietly.
32.2	A place where one can meet faculty and administrators on an informal basis.
24.4	A place to provide academically related programs not found in the classroom.
23.8	A place where one has the opportunities to interact with members of the opposite sex.
16.6	A place to seek advice.
15.9	A place where one is able to find help in his courses (i.e. using other students as resources).
15.3	A place where one is known as a person and not as a number.
14.5	A place to provide one with informal discussions that will improve one's judgment in solving problems.
14.2	A place where one can sometimes be alone.
14.1	A place to provide one with informal discussions to help one learn more about one's self.
12.6	A place to provide one with small discussion groups to help one gain independence from one's parents.
12.5	A place to provide one with group experiences to complete one's growth into adulthood.
11.9	A place to provide rap sessions in order to test one's values and attitudes.
3.2	A place to sleep.
2.3	A place to make new friends.
1.4	A place where one can party.